Teacher Time
Head Start Preschool Episode 4: Can We Be Friends?
Peer Interactions and Your Curriculum

Judi Stevenson-Garcia: Welcome to the final episode of our Teacher Time Series for this year. We are so glad you've joined us today. I'm Judi Garcia, and it's been a pleasure being one of your hosts for this series. I'm here with my cohost Will Scott. We are both part of the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning, and we're so excited to be with you today to talk about supporting peer interactions in early learning settings that serve three- and four-year-olds. Hi, Will. It's nice to be back together with you today.

William Scott: Hi, Judi. It's so nice to be with you. I'm happy to be here today as your cohost for this series.

Judi: This series is intended to provide you with information about the ways in which you can support preschool children's growth and development through the implementation of high-quality and developmentally appropriate curriculum practices. Specifically how your classroom, materials, activities and interactions with children all work together to support children's' growth and development. And we know how important it is to recognize children's individual interests, languages, cultures and learning styles and provide responsive, organized learning environments that promote children's growth and development.

Will: And remember, when we use the term teacher, we're referring to everyone who works with preschool children and their families in an educational environment. This includes family child care and center-based programs.

Judi: As you know, each episode is followed up by a Coffee Break where we'll ask the expert from today's episode your questions that you send in during today's show. So, please remember to enter any questions you have into the chat box at the bottom of your screen. Also, there will be several opportunities for you to engage with us through some chats and polls during today's episode, so make sure to keep an eye out for those.

Will: Also, we don't want this to be the end of the conversation, so please take some time to go to our special Teacher Time community in MyPeers. You'll be able to see the Coffee Breaks there as soon as they are released, and ask questions, participate in polls and engage in conversations with other teachers just like yourself.

Judi: Great. And, finally, make sure you fill out the evaluation at the end of the show. After you complete it, you'll be prompted to print your certificate of attendance. Plus, we'd really like your feedback so we can make this the most useful experience we possibly can. We hope you'll use some of the strategies you hear today and share your ideas both in the comment box and on the MyPeers group.

Will: Last time we talked about the importance of intentionally using interactions with children to support their growth and development in social-emotional and cognitive domains. Today's topic is peer interactions, and the focus is on how peer relationships develop, why they are important to early learning and how we can use routines and learning opportunities to support development of peer relationships.

Judi: Your curriculum likely has guidance for the types of learning opportunities you offer, and it's important to look to your curriculum first for guidance around recommended language for specific skill-building activities and interactions that support peer relationships. But throughout the day there are many opportunities to support children in getting to know each other, playing with each other, developing empathy and creating a community.

Will: We are going to take time today to learn what healthy, positive peer relationships look like and identify some strategies for using routines and learning opportunities to support the development of peer relationships.

Judi: Right. If we stop to think about peer interactions, they have benefits similar to those that come from teacher-child interactions. They help to build community and they also support the development of knowledge and skills. The Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework specifically highlights relationships with other children. This includes how children enter into play situations, learning to take turns in conversations, playing together and talking about that play, and solving social problems together. These are all skills children learn over time, most especially during the preschool years.

Will: So, then the next question we need to ask is how can we use our curriculum and routines to support children in developing these very important skills; skills that will benefit them not only in our programs, but as they move on into kindergarten and beyond. We're going to explore strategies today for doing just that.

Judi: But first we want to hear from you. So, if you've been on MyPeers today you may have already answered this question. If not, please take a moment to do it now. We want to know – What do you enjoy most about children's relationships with each other? Maybe it's their conversations with each other or their ability to forgive and forget. Or maybe you enjoy watching them as they help each other, as they quickly make new friends or when they show true empathy toward a friend who is hurt or feeling sad.

Will: There are so many opportunities throughout the day to observe positive peer interactions. Please take a minute to complete the poll and let us know what you enjoy, and we'll come back to your responses in a bit.

Judi: Now it's time to welcome our guest expert today, Dr. Alex Figueras-Daniel. Dr. Figueras-Daniel is an assistant research professor at the National Institute for Early Education Research which many of us know as NIEER. She has collaborated on NIEER's field research projects over the past five years and served as the spokesperson for NIEER's outreach to the Hispanic media. Alex has been a pre kindergarten teacher and a teacher in a dual language program and has supported many programs and teachers in understanding and implementing high-quality curriculum practices.

Will: Today Alex is here to help us understand the ways in which we can support children in developing positive peer relationships. Welcome, Dr. Alex, for being here. Alex FIGUERAS-DANIEL: Thanks for having me.

Will: Help us understand how children develop relationships and why it's so important.

Alex: Well, there are two overarching points. The first is that- The first important point is that it helps to build classroom community. And we've talked about this in past episodes. It's really important to build a community where children feel comfortable, and that includes each other. Right? And the second piece is that it all contributes to children's growth and development in different domains. So, it's fairly important. Right? We also know that children are born seeking relationships. We often see children and babies gravitating towards each other, wanting to play with each other. I think lots of babies' first words are "moma, dada, baby." So, they're, from early on, seeking ways to engage with other children. And for 3- and 4-year-olds I think a really important point is that this is the beginning of understanding that other people have thoughts and feelings that are separate for themselves, and this is an important piece to start with, and that is where it begins. And so the classroom is an actual place to help them understand more about that. Finally, I think there is also, particularly among 3-year-olds, this beginning of understanding concepts like sharing. And so while they may not be great at it initially, they are starting to think about it. Games that allow them to take turns, to wait, and even just in conversation. This is the way that we can scaffold them in these age groups.

Judi: Yeah. I think sharing can be particularly challenging. But it helps to understand that someone else might want the toy. Right? So, as you start to understand that someone else might want the toy as well, that might help you as you begin to learn how to share. That's a great way to think about supporting children's growth and development. Can you help us think a little bit about routines and maybe the curriculum, and what kinds of things can we put into place to support the development of these positive relationships?

Alex: Sure. So, routines are a super natural way I think to do this. Meal times, transitions, greetings

and departures- these are all times where children can work together to help support each other towards a common goal. Eating or getting the classroom cleaned up so they can move on to something else. And then greeting and departure is natural to learn about how someone else's evening went, or what they had for dinner or what they're going to do next. And so during other times of the day, it is important for teachers to model how to do this in a very positive way, of course, because it includes both languages and behaviors. Asking children about their own life and where they went on vacation How was it? Are you excited to see Grammie, because it's Wednesday and that's her day to cook? - really shows children that they're interested in them, but that this also the way we can engage with each other potentially. Again, modeling is good, but some explicit encouragement and promoting of that kind of behavior and talk with each other is important for teachers to do. So, while teachers should help to solve some problems initially and give them the language and scaffold them through that, eventually they can do it on their own. I think cleaning times and transition times- all of those times are useful for working on that.

Judi: A lot of those points are thinking about building community. Right? We're friends here. We trust each other. We have a community that we're setting up. We care about each other's lives outside of the classroom. What about relationships that can support children's cognitive or social-emotional development?

Alex: Right. I think that the common curriculum that most learning programs sort of adhere to typically involve, for example, like a large-group and a small-group time where children are engaging in all different types of academic content in developmentally appropriate ways of course, but that these times allow children to get to know each other. This is why a small group is so important, for example, and it does give a low-stakes time to get comfortable and to answer questions with only a group of three or four other friends. And then you have more broad times, like free play or choice, where children really have a lot of opportunities to talk with each other and engage with each other in how to interject themselves, for example, in a learning situation or a play situation that's already happening, and giving them those opportunities to sort of negotiate what that feels like with the teacher sort of close enough to be able to scaffold where needed, and to really make that possible for them. Finally, I think outdoor time is a really critical part, because, aside from letting children get really free and engage with all the gross motor materials that are typically available, it also gives teachers a chance to work on games and think about turn taking where there is more freedom for movement and really challenging them to work together and focus in a much more open setting.

Judi: I heard you mention negotiating and turn taking that supports social-emotional development. Right? And then even outdoors you have this negotiating of physical space, which is really important. I think problem solving- turn taking is a way to solve problems that come up. So, it seems like it hits a lot of those developmental domains that we're focused on.

Alex: Sure.

Judi: That's great. That's helpful. We're going to take a few minutes to observe some teachers as they support children's interactions with each other. Pay close attention to the subtle ways teachers help children communicate, learn from each other and work together as a community. Let's watch.

Teacher: What's that, Logan?

Student: Arri's not talking to me.

Teacher: Maybe he didn't hear you. Try asking him again.

Student: Hey, Arri! Can I have one of these?

Teacher: Maybe you could swap one and give him one of yours for one of his. Uh-oh. What happened to the "I"?

Teacher: Then Michael- 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. Don't forget your heads. 13 and... 14! How many friends all together today?

Student: 14!

Teacher: 14. Uh-oh.

Teacher: Okay. The medium with the medium. Perfect. The small with the small. Muy bien, my son.

Teacher: When Peter got back to his house his mother asked, "Did you mail out the letter?" "Yes." He's said, sad. He's sad because his friend is sad. That's right.

Student: 'Cause Amy's sad.

Teacher: Amy's sad, so he's sad too. I get sad when my friends get sad.

Will: Dr. Alex, tell us what you noticed in that video.

Alex: So, I think these are great examples to start with. The first video, where the children are playing in the block area with the teacher, it's a great example of the teacher sort of modeling communication that's necessary for sharing. There's also some show of her identification of need for wait time and giving them a chance to do it on their own, but also, again, giving the language that they needed to really be able to negotiate situations. In the second video we see two children counting as a pair in a morning routine, which is fairly typical in early childhood settings. I think that was really interesting, because being together means that it's somewhat collaborative. And it gives them a chance to use that relationship for some security. You're being asked to do something, but working with a team member is always a little safer than doing it by yourself. So, I think, in some indirect way, that's a good model of that. And then the third video, which was when the children are cleaning up the blocks with their teacher, there is collaboration to tidy up the classroom. This is their joint, shared space where they spend lots of time. But the teacher is still using it as teaching time, and she's modeling and mapping language onto the way that they're putting the blocks away. So, you can see that all of the pieces sort of intersect of course. And the last video, the teacher is reading a book, which is always a really great way to talk about these kinds of social-emotional supports. But she's essentially teaching the children to identify feelings of empathy, and the children are really able to understand that they can feel sad if someone else is feeling sad. And so giving them the labels for those feelings is really important.

Judi: Those are great examples. And thanks for helping us understand them, because sometimes you look at things like cleanup and you don't realize all of the things that are going into just cleaning up some blocks. There is so much there for supporting children's growth and development. And remember, if you have questions for Alex, please submit them in the comments box and she'll be back for our Coffee Break to answer those questions.

Will: Okay. Let's take a minute to look at the responses we received from the poll about what you enjoy the most about children's relationships with each other.

Judi: Well, it looks like from our poll responses that the majority of you really appreciate children's conversations with each other and listening to their conversations. That's one of my favorite things as well. Many of you said that their ability to forgive and forget is what you appreciate, which is also something that we really love about young children. And then also some of you really appreciate watching them help each other and how open they are to making new friends. So, we can tell that our teachers have a great appreciation for some amazing skills that young children already come to the classroom prepared with. So, now it's time for another question. We just heard about what you enjoy about children's relationships, but we know that part of the challenge is supporting children even when their interactions are not so pleasant. So, we want to hear from you. In the chat box please take a minute to let us know - What is your greatest challenge around supporting peer relationships? Maybe it's finding a balance between supporting children as they try to solve problems and letting them work things out on their own. Maybe you even have children who struggle to enter into play situations or have a hard time making friends.

Will: Take a minute to tell us where your challenge is in your program. We'll come back to your responses in a bit.

Judi: Now we're going to take a few minutes to focus specifically on the development of language and literacy. Earlier this week, I had the chance to sit down with Dr. Linda Espinosa and talk with her about how peer relationships support the development of language and literacy skills. Dr. Espinosa is Professor Emeritus of Early Childhood Education at the University of Missouri, Columbia. She has

worked extensively with low-income Hispanic and Latino children and families throughout the state of California as a school administrator and program director. She has published more than 90 research articles, book chapters, and training manuals on how to establish effective educational services for low-income, minority families and children who are acquiring English as a second language. Let's watch.

Judi: Hi, Linda.

Linda: Hi, Judi.

Judi: Thanks for being back with us here today. So, we're excited to talk about language and literacy with you. The last time you were here we talked a little bit about how teachers interact with children in ways that really support their language and literacy development. Today our focus is really on supporting children in growing relationships with each other, developing friendships and empathy. And so one of the things I was hoping you could help us think about a little bit is what that has to do with language and literacy. What do children need in terms of language in order to support friends, but also how do those peer interactions support them in developing and growing their skills in language and literacy?

Linda: Right. All young children- all preschoolers, 3- and 4-year-olds are social animals, so they're compelled to find friendships, to have- form engagements with other children and to play with other children. In order to do that, you have to have some command of the language in order to enter into other children's play. This is a hugely motivating factor for young children, especially those who are not native English speakers to learn the language so that they then can enter into other children's play and have these ongoing interactions around language. And I think it's something that early childhood teachers need to pay particularly close attention to, because if you know that a child is very, very early in English language development, and they are struggling in social groups staying to the outside, watching more than entering, which is a normal part of social and language development for dual language learners, but if you witness this, then it is incumbent upon us to set up situations where they can be in a fairly trusting environment with their peers and maybe a peer who speaks that home language, but also has more developed English so that they can start to learn English from a peer as they're engaging in the block building corner or painting paintings together or outside running around in the yard together, which is a great time as well. They tend to get very excited about that and use language in creative ways out in the outdoors so that you have ways for children to practice the language, to be spontaneous with the language, to reach out to other children so that they can be engaged together and then start watching the language fly, because it will happen, and you will see so much about their basic understandings, their feelings about using each language, and then their ability to use it with which children and in which situations.

Judi: Right. I think just about my 5-year-old and my 3-year-old. My 3-year-old's vocabulary is kind of amazing right now, but that's because he has this 5-year-old model for him. When they engage in conversations with each other, it's just so interesting to listen to what they talk about. I think that's really important not only for dual language learners, but children who might have some delays or especially very young children who might not be as verbal yet to have those interactions with children to build their vocabulary. I think that that's a great opportunity for them to engage in that. Can you help us think specifically about different components of the curriculum or different parts of the day or the routine where we can support children in these kinds of interactions?

Linda: Right. Because there are certain parts of the day where children are listening to adults obviously, and that's good for language development as well. But overall there should be times of the day when what you are hearing is child talk. So, they are talking to each other. Maybe they're talking to themselves doing some self-talk, but there are places in the early childhood classroom where language seems to be a focus and gets attention from the children and gets elaborated, and that's dramatic play actually. They find an awful lot of creative use of new words, and highly interactive back and forth among 2, 3 or 4 children at a time to explore a theme: if they're trying to get somebody to the hospital or if they're trying to get somebody some medicine, that they will persist over time and find ways to bring in a unique vocabulary or unique objects that will help with this project that they're trying to save the man's life or whatever. They naturally think up these little scenarios. As we know

the children and we know the themes that we're working on in the classroom, we kind of have an idea of who needs to build vocabulary and in what areas. Then we can supply those materials that they then start to label, start to use, start to talk about. It can be print material. It can be objects, reality. We talk about that a lot. But that's all part of the art of teaching: you understand where this is likely to go with them so you're prepared with the setup, with the materials, with the arrangement, with the print backup to all of that.

Judi: Right. That makes sense. I think you've talked a little bit about the environment. We talked about that previously. What about the parts of the day? Not just what's available in the classroom, but the routine. What parts of the routine support children in this area?

Linda: During choice time, obviously, that is their time to talk with each other. During whole group time you may break it up. Let's say you're doing a theme on transportation, and people are talking about ways that they get to school or something like that. You have the children talk to each other. And you know who should be partners. They talk to each other. They share each other, and then you chart it. So, it's a way for them to learn to communicate around topics that you then can record for academic purposes. So, during large circle time, and certainly during small circle time you can have children exchange ideas with each other and use their contributions, if it's a dialogic reading activity. So, you use their contributions where you're talking and expand upon that. During transition time, that's probably not a good time to have children talking to each other, but it's probably a good time to have routines where they're singing chants. You've got some really rich vocabulary words in those chants, and the children are all singing together. What we're finding more and more is this music, the melody to words, seems to be the glue to retaining it neurologically. So that, as they sing, and if the words in those chants have depth and meaning, it also builds some cohesion among the children, because they all know the chants together, they know when to sing them and, little did they know, is building their vocabulary and their early literacy skills.

Judi: That's great. So, you're building community and you're building vocabulary and you're building their brains just by singing a chant during your transition time.

Linda: You've got it.

Judi: That's great. So, we talked a little bit about dual language learners, but are there some specific strategies for supporting them in developing friendships?

Linda: Yes. Again, you have a knowledge of the extent to which they can speak with monolingual English speakers. You should have a knowledge of where are they on this scale to English language development? Where are they with their home language development? And then in the classroom find ways to pair children together on a task. For instance, they could be paired together on a computer task, which is a great way to stimulate language. And then if you do this as a teacher, listen to the ways in which they find to communicate using both languages, because they will engage in things like code switching and whatnot, which is fine, because they're using resources from both languages to communicate. Or you can assign two children and say, "Maybe you and you and you and you would like to paint me a picture together of the museum we went to or the zoo. I want you to talk about it and decide the most important animals, and then build a picture together," and then let them do it.

[Laughter]

They will start talking about it together, and then you listen.

Judi: And then you listen. And I think what's really one of the most important components is making sure that you're listening to the children as they engage with each other so that you can really think about who needs extra support or who is one or your children who you love to use as a support, right, as a model for other children in what they're engaged in. I think that's really helpful.

Linda: Another aspect of including the child's language in the classroom is making sure that you have representations of all the languages that the children speak in your classroom so that if you have Urdu, Japanese, Mandarin, Spanish and English somewhere, those need to be represented in your literacy materials so children can see them and in the language they hear in the classroom.

Judi: That's great. Well, thank you, Linda. Thanks for being here today.

Linda: Well, thanks for having me.

Judi: It has been wonderful having Linda here with us for each episode this season. If you'd like more information on supporting language and literacy in your classroom, you can go to the ECLKC and search for the Planned Language Approach, a comprehensive, systemic, research-based way for early childhood programs to ensure optimal language and literacy services for children who speak English and for those who are dual language learners.

Will: Well, we've heard from many of you about the challenges you face in your programs around supporting peer relationships. Let's take a look at our chat responses.

Judi: Sure. We had a few people responding. We heard from Katie, who said, "What do you do when you have kids who say, 'I'm not your friend,' or, 'You can't play with me.'?" I'm sure that everyone has heard that scenario.

Will: Yes. And we also have Wida who says, "I have a shy child who trouble making friends. How can I help?"

Judi: That's great. That's another really good question when you have really shy kids. And we heard from someone, B Germaine, who said that the greatest challenge is being able to transition some students from a self-centered behavior to a broader outlook that validates other's wants, needs and opinions. I think that that's a challenge we have as adults even sometimes.

Will: Absolutely.

Judi: So, this is great. Thank you so much for those responses. If you need additional resources to support you in addressing those challenges, you'll find several at the end of your Viewer's Guide. Now let's welcome back Dr. Alex. Hi, Alex. Thanks for coming back. Can you help us? You've heard here in some of our questions that teachers are really struggling sometimes with supporting children in their relationships with each other. So, what are some things we can do to help develop those friendships?

Alex: I think using stories and puppets, like we saw the teacher doing in the video previously, is really important. The stories give an accessible way for children to process some of these thoughts with pictures and follow-up conversations. And I think the puppets help also to maybe put children in the role of the person maybe who is being told that they're not the friend. We know that that's pretty common, just like the question came up for you today, hearing that "You're not my friend," or, "You can't come to my party." Children really seem to have this long-term thought about ending something. And so helping them to understand that at the moment when you don't want to play with someone that there are other words that you can use rather than cutting someone off, for example. I think puppets and acting things out may be a good way to get children to empathize with each other in a way that feels safe and fun, which is obviously important for early learners. And as teachers need to support social problem-solving. That's key. I think that after they have some strategies, when they have the right language and the vocabulary, they're able to then do it on their own. But I think it is important to scaffold that and give them the words- anxious, feeling frustrated, or feeling jealous. Those are not words necessarily that you know without feeling them. So that's a perfect opportunity to tell them that that's what's happening, or to help them understand if that's the case. And then I think also talking outside of the situation once things are over to remind them about the words and the strategies that were used at that moment are helpful, because, just like with learning language the more you revisit the concepts, the better it is for them to understand and process them. And finally, as said earlier, modeling. And modeling interactions for children who, let's say, aren't ready to engage independently, and showing someone that rather than knocking someone's block structure down, because maybe they weren't part of the play, and really understanding that maybe that's where it's coming from, teaching them that maybe a better way is to ask, "Am I able to help build with you?" and then be okay with the children's answer and then process from there. But I think that's really key.

Judi: I think it's interesting. Sometimes we maybe expect children to be able to negotiate these things on their own. But I think from what you said, we need to model it ourselves- speak respectfully and create friendships with children. We talked about that last time. Right? And then also giving children

the words so that they can eventually do it on their own. And we're going to take a few minutes right now to hear from teachers about how they use a specific strategy to support peers in solving social problems. They call it their solution kit. And they work with children from the beginning of the year, first, supporting them in using it together, and then eventually some of their children are able to use it on their own to solve problems. Let's listen.

Teacher: A lot of things that happen in the classroom, it's not planned. It's just kind of spur of the moment. We learn to- We have a toolbox, or what we call our solution kit in our classroom. There are several items in there, including emotions, faces, our schedule for the day, conflict resolution options- things like that that kind of give the children some tools to solve problems as we've modeled for them, and then references for them to go to when they are having those challenges themselves. For example, one time today one of the students was a little upset about another student taking a block that he was using, and he came to me with a very sad face and mentioned how he was feeling and what had happened. I suggested to him to get the solution kit if he's not able to communicate with his friend yet, which he was able to do. And he brought it over to his friend. He said to his friend, "I was still using that." And the friend genuinely apologized. He didn't know that he was using it, gave him the block back and then everybody walked away with smiles. So, that is an example of where things can go right.

[Laughter]

There are occasional times when things don't work out so nicely. But even in those situations we try to model the language that we want the children to use and to practice. We try to model realistic situations. Sometimes everybody doesn't want to play with each other. Sometimes we need some private time and some alone time and just being able to communicate that with each other makes it that much better for everyone involved. When your friends know how you feel- feeling is a big thing that we talk about in our classroom- then we know what is okay for us to do and what's not okay for us to do. We also try to make sure that we focus hard on respecting each other's space and just using our words for even simple things like a high five and a hug, just asking permission first to make sure that that person is okay with you coming into their space and sharing some of their space with you.

Teacher: The more mature children will go to the problem solution kit themselves and they will get out a timer. I also have a sand timer where they have to take turns, and they will do it themselves. I had the two little girls before who had a problem with sharing the beakers. So, I reminded them- they still need guidance and they still need at least some redirection and reminder: "Remember, get the problem solution kit." But they automatically said, "Oh, we need to take turns." In that case they didn't need the timer, but yesterday they did need the timer to get in the car. They got the timer themselves. They switched. It's a sand timer. They switched it, and then they were able to take turns. "Look, Miss Yamila, I'm taking turns." Those are my more mature children. That's what you want- the goal. Right now it's March, so right now they know it. But at the beginning their first approach is, "Get the teacher. Get the teacher. Get the teacher." But I sit them down away from the area of conflict. I take away what's causing the conflict, and then we talk about it. We solve it. Then I put it in the middle, and then they come up with a solution. But it's all visuals. It's all right there in front of them. But as they learn, then they remember, "Okay. Take turns." They remember the choices.

Will: Dr. Alex, what did you think?

Alex: I think that these teachers are really onto something. I think that they're totally right. And scaffolding children at the beginning of the year to develop those skills is critical, right? because it allows for a smooth-sailing kind of year where you can really focus on the fun stuff. Not to say that these situations are never going to arise, but at least when they do, the children have the tools and the language that they need to be able to get through them. I think the other piece that's mentioned is really that idea of respecting children as people and understanding that sometimes they do need privacy or time to themselves, just we do, as adults, right? Alone time or however you refer to it. And so personal space and support with engaging with others, we all go through these sorts of thoughts. The other piece that I think is also mentioned by the teachers is really understanding where children are in terms of their strengths, their challenges around engaging with peers, but also the things that they like to do, because in that way the teacher is really able to facilitate children in a way that makes

the most sense. So, really understanding where a very active-play child may need, what kind of play partner is right for them. And the teacher can help with that knowing all of the children of course. And that, finally, the routines and the curriculum, they're all there to support all of these things. As we mentioned in one of our previous episodes, those pieces are the third teacher. That's why it's so critical that those pieces are well done, because if you don't have a space for children to go when they want to be alone, or to engage in active play when they want to, those pieces aren't going to fit so easily together.

Judi: That's so interesting. This has been really helpful. Those are great strategies. So, thank you, Alex. And thanks for being here with us throughout this whole series. It's been wonderful.

Alex: Thanks. Thanks so much.

Judi: Well, as Alex just said, and as the teachers mentioned in their comments, in order for us to support positive peer relationships, it's important to really understand children's strengths and challenges around engaging with their peers. It's also important to remember that routines and curriculum play a very important part in supporting the development of these relationships and help to build community in your learning environment. So, we're going to give you one last homework assignment.

Will: That's right. Your homework is to take some time to specifically observe and document your children's skills in the area of peer relationships and then think about and plan to use your routines and curriculum to support their growth in this area. Where you can add opportunities for children to work together? How can you support them in social problem solving?

Judi: Right. And you can even think ahead to next year. What strategies can you use early on that will help children develop really meaningful and positive relationships as they move through the year? Where can you scaffold to build those skills so that by the end of the year you have children who are independently building and maintaining positive peer relationships? Think about it, and then let us know on MyPeers.

Will: Now we're going to take a moment and connect this thinking about implementing a responsive curriculum to the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework. Peter Pizzolongo is here to tell us all about that.

Peter Pizzolongo: I'm Peter Pizzolongo, Director of Training & Technical Assistance Services at the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. This portion of Teacher Time we'll focus on ELOF: The Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five. ELOF is a framework that represents the continuum of learning for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers; what children should know and be able to do during their formative years from birth through age five. ELOF outlines and describes the skills, behaviors and concepts that Early Head Start and Head Start programs must foster in all children, including children who are dual language learners and children with disabilities. ELOF is organized in a way that can help education staff and families understand child development and guide the ways in which we help children learn. You can learn more about ELOF by going to the ELOF pages on the ECLKC Website, the Office of Head Start's Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. For today's topic, Can We Be Friends? Supporting Early Peer Relationships, our ELOF segment focus is on the domain social and emotional development. This domain includes goals for relationships with adults, relationships with other children, emotional functioning and preschoolers having a sense of identity and belonging. I'm going to focus on the subdomain relationships with other children. This subdomain has three goals. The first goal is "Child engages in and maintains positive interactions and relationships with other children." The developmental progression leading to this goal includes skills such as, "3-year-olds sometimes engage in and maintain interactions with other children without support from an adult or with prompts from an adult." Preschool children may spontaneously engage in prosocial behaviors with other children: helping, taking turns and sometimes even sharing with other children. By 4, most preschoolers sustain interactions with other children more often and for longer periods of time. They are likely to show some preference for playing with particular children. They have a variety of skills for entering social situations with other children: suggesting something to do together, joining an existing activity or

sharing a toy. Most 4-year-olds can take turns in conversations and interactions with other children. They develop friendships with one or two preferred other children. The second goal in this subdomain is "Child engages in cooperative play with other children." The developmental progression leading to this goal includes "By 3 years of age the child can plan and enact play in a coordinated way. By 4 most preschoolers can play cooperatively with other children in an increasingly coordinated way." 4-year-olds can work with other children to make plans for what and how they will play. By 5, most children can engage in joint play planning dramatic play and sustaining roles as well as playing games with rules. The third goal in this subdomain is, "Child uses basic problem-solving skills to resolve conflicts with other children." The developmental progression includes, "Recognizes when there is a social problem, can suggest solutions to conflicts with adult guidance." By 4, most children can suggest solutions to conflicts without adult guidance and can compromise when working or playing in a group. 4-year-olds may seek out an adult for support in more challenging moments. By 5, most children can recognize and describe basic social problems in books or pictures. They can answer questions, such as, "Why do you think the boy in this story might be sad?" To solve conflicts, five-year-olds typically can share, take turns, and compromise. They can express feelings, needs and opinions in conflict situations. What, you might ask, is the foundation for these skills in preschool children? Well, there's an ELOF for that. Infants typically show interest in, interact with and develop personal relationships with other children. This begins with young infants looking attentively at other children, touching their faces; and recognizing other familiar children and smiling at them, making sounds directed to them. As toddlers, children typically seek out other children for social interaction, develop friendships and engage in more elaborate play with friends. Preschoolers' ability to play cooperatively begins with young infants watching attentively to what another baby is doing. This progresses to infants making similar sounds as another infant and playing next to other children with similar toys, what we know as parallel play. Most toddlers can join in playing with other children, sometimes even taking turns or doing joint activities with a common goal, such as building block structures and engaging in simple dramatic play scenarios. How do adults promote social-emotional development in young children? Adults in these young children's worlds model what good relationships between people look like. We provide opportunities for preschoolers to engage in cooperative play with one other child and small groups. Large group activities promote children sharing experiences together. We also provide opportunities during routines, such as setting the table together, eating together and cleanup at the end of self-selected activity time. And, as teachers of young children, you know you make decisions about the experiences you provide for them and how you will interact with each child based on appropriate expectations of what children should know and do at various stages of their development, information you can access through the ELOF and your program's curriculum. And you know each child in your care: her individual strengths and interests, and the social and cultural context in which she lives. You use that information to plan the experiences you set up, the teaching practices you use- acknowledging, encouraging, giving specific feedback, asking questions, giving information- to help the children in your care build good relationships with each other. It all begins with an understanding of appropriate goals for children's learning and the developmental progressions that lead to these goals. The ELOF is a tool for education staff to use to help with that understanding. I hope that this segment has helped you to better understand the Early Learning Outcomes Framework and you recognize how the ELOF can help you to be a better teacher.

Judi: Thank you, Peter. We are going to transition now to talk a little bit about the social-emotional aspect of peer relationships and how to support children who may have a difficult time engaging with other children in a positive way. Earlier I spoke with Dr. Neal Horen, from the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness. He's going to give us some strategies for supporting young children in their relationships and also give us some tips on developing positive relationships as adults. Let's watch.

Judi: Hi, Neal.

Neal Horen: Hi, Judi. How are you?

Judi: Welcome back.

Neal: Thank you.

Judi: Thanks for being here today. We're happy to see you.

Neal: I love coming. Yeah.

Judi: So, today we're talking a little bit about how to use your curriculum in the classroom to support the development of peer relationships, so how children get along with each other. And I think that this is an area where you could really help us think about how teachers can support children not just in getting along, but really building the community that you talked about last time in terms of engaging with each other, learning from each other, supporting each other. So, maybe just help us think a little bit about what that would look like for very young children.

Neal: Sure.

Judi: Peer relationships.

Neal: Sure. Let me start with just sort of a basic premise, which is that I've always said if the choice is between being super ready academically and super ready for school social-emotional-wise, I'm picking social-emotional-wise. I want them to be ready in all areas, but the development of those peer relationships skills is really critical. I can tell you from lots and lots of observations that if you go to a kindergarten classroom, if you go to a first grade classroom and you walk around at recess, you will see that there are clearly separating children who are socially skilled, have good peer relationships and those who are having more difficulty. So, if we can establish those early on, the skills that sort of contributes to that, the ability to connect with your peers, that's a lifelong skill. That's a skill that gets you- if you think about the people that you enjoy working with- me of course, but other people- part of that is about those peer relation skills. In a classroom what we want to do is we want to afford a number of opportunities for children to work together and to start to think about if we're really paying attention, if teachers are really paying attention, what they notice is which pairings work well, which groupings work well. Much like at work, there are probably people that you tend to enjoy spending time with, there are other people you don't spend quite as much time with, but you're always trying to get along with everyone. And so when we afford children those opportunities and we pay attention, we can start to figure out which children have these skills, which children have these skills, which children work well together, which children are leaders, which children tend not to want to be in charge. And then we observe that, we can then provide opportunities for them to learn those other skills, because we want to help, if we think about social skills as skills- they're not innate. We'll help children learn how to ride a bicycle. We'll help them learn how to write, read, know their colors and shapes. Sometimes we don't spend as much time understanding that that's a skill. And if we teach that skill, if we help support their development of that skill, it goes a long way.

Judi: One thing I've observed in classrooms sometimes is children having difficulty entering into a play situation. And sometimes that comes out as grabbing a toy, banging into someone's structure or kids not knowing how to accept a child into their play situation. We got this whole story set up in our dramatic play area, and we don't have a character for you. Right? And so I wonder if you can help us think about those kinds of situations. Are there activities or strategies that teachers can build either in the moment or outside of the moment to help children negotiate those things that they encounter?

Neal: I think the word that you use- negotiate- is a really important word. These are hard things for other people to sometimes do. We've all run into folks who enter into a conversation that we're having, and we're like, "That was a little jarring." And so one of the ways in which to help children learn those skills is to practice and to even say, "Let's practice. You both are having a conversation. You have to join." We sort of liken it to surfing. You have to catch the wave. But you have to give multiple opportunities and not see it as- I think we talked about this a few episodes ago- "At 1:15 on Tuesdays we practice conversations," but as a conversation is happening and you see a child enter very smoothly, point that out. Or if you see a child having difficulty, know that you may want to go back to that child and say, "Boy, that seemed like it was sort of tough," and sit with that child quietly- "Let's talk about how you might enter the conversation." If a group of 5-year-olds or 4-year-olds are having a conversation about a particular topic and another child comes in and just interrupts and says, "I don't like what you're talking about" that's not very smooth. As opposed to maybe maybe you come in slowly. You listen, and then you join when there's an appropriate moment, those kinds of things.

And giving them opportunities throughout the day. So, even in the morning time, which is a time when there is a lot going on -- we talked about this a while back, there is a lot going on. There are a lot of separate things happening. Children arriving. Children are already there. How do we pay attention to the fact that those are opportunities? Conversational opportunities arise throughout the day. When teachers are paying attention to it, they have a great chance of supporting that skill.

Judi: And I think we talked about this previously too about how teachers can model this for children. We've talked a lot about mealtimes, but that's one of the things that I love about early childhood environments is very often the meals are shared and are really meant to build those social and conversational skills. A lot of times you sit with different kids every day, and so you have the opportunity to both model what an engaging and interested social interaction would look like, and then hopefully support children in asking questions and responding to children's comments in ways that really build those relationships together. What about kids who maybe don't have language skills or are really having a hard time even with modeling and setting up your environment to support this? Are there specific things teachers can do to help those children?

Neal: Well I think one thing is obviously having a routine. We know that routines are helpful for all children. And I think sort of broadly, most of the kinds of things that we talk about should be done for all children, and those children who are having a little bit of difficulty may need just a little bit of extra help or a little bit of extra support. So, one thing may be that you pair those children who are having difficulty with those children who are a little bit better at that skill and maybe they are seated next to each other during a meal. Or using puppets or social stories or actual stories to talk about this and get those lessons out in lots of different ways. We know that children who have difficulty with language or children who are just having difficulty with this in general may learn in different ways. They may learn through a story as opposed to direct conversation. Some children pick it up by modeling. Some children pick it up by being paired with a different child in the classroom. I think when teachers are willing to afford multiple opportunities, they then become better aware of which strategies work for which children. We talked about this previously. If we think about the classroom as a community, how are we helping all the members of our community and not focused on the one child who is having difficulty, nor focused on the nineteen children who are doing what we want, but as a community how are we making sure that everybody is involved in our community in ways that they're comfortable?

Judi: Right. Well, I think this is a great way to transition into thinking about teachers and their own health and well-being, and maybe even the larger community of adults and adult peers that adults are going to be engaging with on a daily basis. Very often you might have a relationship with the other adult or adults in your classroom, but also as you extend out into the larger community. I think even thinking about parents too engaging with other adults can be a challenge. So, for thinking about teacher health and wellness and about peer relationships and what they do to support teachers in their work, can you just give us an idea of what healthy peer relationships would look like in the workplace?

Neal: Whether we're talking about early care and education settings or any other business, part of it is how do we relate to one another, and what opportunities do we have to relate to one another? Specifically here, obviously one thing we want to do is build trusting relationships. One way to do that is to not gossip, not to have little cliques of talking about one another behind each other's back, but to have lots of reflective time where we can talk as a group to the points that may be bothering somebody; we don't just keep those hidden away, but we actually talk about them and try and actually make changes that might be supportive. In the classroom oftentimes there are two adults. We want to make sure that their relationship is as highly functioning as possible, which means that they have to know one another, know what pushes each other's buttons and be supportive. If I'm a teacher in a classroom and there is a particular child, who, really for some reason, I'm really struggling with, and if we're being honest, that can happen, maybe you- you're in the classroom with me- you know that, and so you're more keenly aware of the times where I'm having some difficulty to sort of step in and say, "Hey, I have an idea. Let me do this," and sort of give me a break, or work with that child and vice versa. And those kinds of strategies where teachers are paying attention, they're mindful- we talked about mindfulness- when they're mindful of the kinds of things that make a classroom a more harmonious community and make a program a more harmonious program, so, from the director to

the teachers to the relationships with parents, when we've been in really high-functioning, really good programs, what we see is everybody's in it with each other and not just, "I just want to focus on my stuff," or my child or my classroom. It's we're all in this together.

Judi: Sometimes- and I experience this as a teacher myself- it can feel very isolating sometimes when you're with children all day. Sometimes you really don't get the chance to engage with adults. I felt this as a mother too sometimes. Like I just want to talk to another adult. So I wonder if there are ways, You talked a little bit about giving teachers time to reflect with each other, but are there things that programs can do build community or support and kind of keep teachers from feeling isolated giving them the opportunity to get some of that daily stress off of their backs and relate to other people who are in the same environment?

Neal: I think that's a great question, because we don't want to force people to spend inordinate amounts of time outside of work together, but we do want to give them some opportunities. I was just talking with folks in a program where they do yoga, was it yoga or Zumba? It's one exercise thing that I'm not very good at. It was one of those. But they do that after the day is over. They offer it. You're not required to go. But it's a way in which then folks are connecting on a very different level. We're not talking about lesson plans. We're not talking about challenging behavior. We're just talking about Zumba or yoga. And it's a time to do some of those mindfulness activities, but it's also a time to connect. Affording opportunities on your professional development days that are not just somebody stands up and talks at you for eight hours so we can say we did professional development, but let's share a meal together that's just adults. Let's actually talk to one another about adult things. The ten minutes before things really start rolling, before all the children and the families are arriving, maybe in those ten minutes there is a nice pot of coffee and there is a nice space where people can sit and just say, "Did you watch that show last night?" "Teacher Time is on tomorrow. We've got to get together. It's appointment television."

Judi: That's great. Well, thank you. I think this is really helpful. And I love the idea of supporting community, both inside with your classroom and with your children, but also outside with the other adults that you work with. This has been great. Thank you so much.

Neal: Glad to do it. Glad to see you again.

Judi: Thanks so much to Dr. Horen for being with us for this entire series, and for giving us such great strategies for supporting wellness and resiliency in our programs for our children and for ourselves. Well, Will and I have really enjoyed being here with you for this series exploring the many ways curriculum can support children's growth and development. We talked about implementing a curriculum that's responsive to children's interests, knowledge and skills; creating a learning environment that supports individual children in accessing and learning from materials and learning opportunities; interacting with children in ways that support their growth and development; and today we talked about supporting children in developing meaningful and positive relationships with each other.

Will: We hope this series has been helpful to you. You will be able to find all of these episodes on the ECLKC, along with all of the resources we have referenced. And please keep the conversation going on MyPeers.

Judi: Right. We want to thank all of our guest teachers and experts for being here with us. And thank you for joining us as well. Now please enjoy this last Moment of Learning for the 2016-2017 series of Preschool Teacher Time.

Will: Thank you, and goodbye.

Teacher: Pablo and Lorenzo, can you start here with Christian? We're counting everybody. One. Keep going. Two. Three. Four. Can't hear you. Nice and loud. Five.

Student: Five

Teacher: Samuel? Six. Then Michael. Seven.

[Laughter]

Eight. Nine. Ten.

Students: Ten

Teacher: Eleven. Twelve. Don’t forget your heads. Thirteen and fourteen. How many friends all together today?

Student: Fourteen!

Teacher: Fourteen.